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## THE TALLEYRAND MEMOIRS.

BY THE RIGHT HON. SIR CHARLES WENTWORTH DILKE, BART.

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MUCH interest has been excited by the prospect that we shall shortly have before us the memoirs of Talleyrand ; but it may be doubted whether these will contain much matter of value to those who are well acquainted with the politics of the period between 1789 and 1834. A French historian, who has seen and turned over, if he has not thoroughly read, the memoirs, has informed us that in them Talleyrand first relates his actions as a member of the Constituent Assembly, his virtual exile in America, his return to France, and his service under the directory, with which the earlier period of his political activity closed. In the memoirs, however, he writes as one who has changed his point of view since the times themselves in which he was an actor. For example, Talleyrand, though a bishop, took a leading part in the destruction of the fabric of the Roman Catholic Church in France ; but in his memoirs he severely blames the course which was pursued, and calls it the chief fault of all the many committed by the assembly of which he was a powerful member. It is, therefore, probable that in his account of his missions to London in 1792 and in 1830 to 1834, in his history of the Congress of Vienna, and in his relation of his tenure of the office of Minister for Foreign Affairs in France under the directory, under the consulate, and under the empire, Talleyrand will be found to present to the reader, in his memoirs, a less accurate view of the state of society and of the motives and nature of his policy than is given us already in the works of M. Pallain, which contain the despatches and letters from and to Talleyrand preserved in the French Foreign Office.

Doubtless, however, as regards the period between July, 1797, and September, 1815, Talleyrand will have much to say in his

memoirs about his contemporaries that will be amusing, though it may not possess much value. He had in life the happiness to be upon the winning side, and he prepared for himself in his last days the death-bed satisfaction of feeling that, as regards anecdotic history, he would have the last word. Talleyrand directed the foreign policy of the consulate and of the empire at the height of the power of France. He was happy enough to be able to give way to other men at the moment of the disasters of Napoleon, and then to be employed by Louis XVIII. to undo the harm that had been done during the period of his temporary fall. As he dissociated himself from the follies of Napoleon, it is certain that in the memoirs he adopts towards the Napoleon of 1807 to 1815 the sneering tone which may be expected to have accompanied the sneering expression which is marked on the face of Talleyrand in David's great picture of the coronation—the glory of the French modern school.

Talleyrand gave powerful help to France at Vienna in 1814–1815, but he did not restore the Bourbons so much as accept a restoration which he was one of the first to see to be inevitable. In his memoirs, however, he naturally becomes the Monk of the French Restoration. Talleyrand will doubtless tell the world that the English, the Austrians, and the Russians were alike either hostile or indifferent to the claims of Louis XVIII., and that it was his conversion of Alexander of Russia in a single night (after he had had the astuteness to cause the Emperor to be billeted upon himself) which produced the “Bourbon solution.”

As regards the Congress of Vienna, it is to be believed that the memoirs add nothing to the despatches and the private letters between Louis XVIII. and his minister which were published by M. Pallain in 1881, in a volume which was translated into English and republished as two big volumes in London. From 1815 to 1823 (it has been stated by M. Valfrey that) Talleyrand wrote nothing, and he only took his memoirs up again after he had found himself attacked in memoirs which were being published by his enemies, and in which the execution of the Duc d'Enghien and other faults of the empire were laid on him, while he had also been accused of having in 1814 employed agents to assassinate the Emperor. It has been said that Talleyrand in his memoirs ridicules the latter charge, but boldly faces the former and to some

extent defends the execution of the Prince. Again from 1823 it seems that Talleyrand wrote nothing until after he had become ambassador of France at London under Louis Philippe in 1830, at a moment which immediately followed the Revolution of July, and his memoirs end with an account of his embassy to London. Talleyrand in the strongest terms protests that he had no part or lot in the creation of the Orleans monarchy, of which he undoubtedly foresaw the probable downfall. However interesting, therefore, the memoirs may be from the anecdotic point of view, it is probable that they will in no degree detract from the permanent value of the publications of M. Pallain, and that we can already form for ourselves from those books an accurate view of the character and of the work of Talleyrand. M. Pallain has already published a large volume on the mission of Talleyrand to London in 1792, and one on the occupancy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by Talleyrand under the directory, as well as the volume of letters and despatches during the Congress of Vienna, of which I have just now spoken. M. Pallain promises us a volume on the embassy to London, 1830-1834, after which he will go back to the earlier times and publish a volume on Talleyrand's ministry under the consulate and another on his ministry under the empire.

To my mind the really important periods in the life of Talleyrand are the two when he more than any other man gave to France, not this or that emperor, but her position of respected authority in the councils of Europe; the period which may be called that of the consulate and beginning of the empire, and the period of the Congress of Vienna. In his mission to London in 1792 Talleyrand was forced to pretend to negotiate with people who did not really intend to sign engagements with him, and in his ministry under the directory he was the servant of rather foolish persons who wished him to treat for peace with England, but who thought that he could bring them Gibraltar for them to restore to Spain, the Cape for them to restore to Holland, and the Channel Islands for the French themselves! The most interesting period of all in the life of Talleyrand was that at the beginning of the century when he had Bonaparte for a master, but a master who at that moment allowed himself to be guided by Talleyrand's mind in affairs which at a later time he fancied he understood for himself better than his mentor could teach them to him.

The state of France at the beginning of the century, or, rather, properly speaking, in the last year of the last century, is worth consideration in connection with the career of Talleyrand. The year 1800 opened with the establishment of the personal supremacy of Napoleon, by the will of the people, in the internal affairs of France. His sudden return from Egypt late in 1799 had been followed by the fall of the directory, and January, 1800, saw Napoleon dictator of France under republican forms, by the full wish of a nation tired out by that combined tyranny and stupidity of the directory under which Talleyrand himself, as I have said, had suffered. The new constitution had been proclaimed on Christmas eve. Nearly four millions of Frenchmen had supported it by their votes, and but a thousand or so had voted the other way. Bonaparte was First Consul for ten years, with power to name the Senate and the Council of State. In February he took up his residence at the royal palace; and about this time he began to organize, with that marvellous grasp of detail and with the extraordinary administrative power which he possessed, the modern administration of France, which was destined to endure through all changes in the form of government. Foreign affairs at this time he left aside, and with regard to them merely followed Talleyrand's advice, absorbed as Bonaparte was in home matters. It is too often forgotten by foreigners (but never by Frenchmen, who see his presence in every department of their government to this day) that Napoleon was as great a domestic administrator as he was a soldier, and that his finance, his roads, bridges, canals, docks, his laws, his universities and schools, are at least as worthy of recollection as are his victories. It is a subject for regret that, having the enormous administrative energy which he undoubtedly possessed, he should not have been better advised, as regards domestic matters, in the use he made of it. In education, for example, Napoleon did little for primary instruction, and hardly anything for girls, though he covered the country with high-schools for boys and with technical foundations. His code will not bear too close examination.

Still, when all possible deductions have been made, we at least must wonder at his work, if we cannot praise it. All that was done in France at this moment, and the sum of work done was fabulously great, had to be done by him, for he was not surrounded by men of any great parts; and Fouché and Talleyrand, who

alone were brilliant, were of little use to him in purely domestic matters. Talleyrand at this time managed his foreign affairs and Fouché his police, and with equal success. Carnot, to whom office was for a short time given, was an impossible servant for an autocrat ; and Laplace, great as he was in the realms of thought, was a miserable administrator. The universal favor with which the usurpation of supreme power by Napoleon was first received and then confirmed by France was not to the credit of the nation and was disgraceful to its leading men. None of them went into voluntary exile. Hardly one protested. Many, on the contrary, who had quitted France at an earlier date, seized the opportunity to return, and (like Chateaubriand) to lay their homage at the master's feet. The character of Bonaparte, even as at that time revealed to the world, was not of a nature to make devotion to his fortunes by good men easy. He was a great commander, it was true ; but he had been not long before a club orator, the bosom-friend of Robespierre, who had, after courting all parties in turn, obtained the command of the army in Italy by marrying the cast-off mistress of a powerful man, and had used the command for the purpose of enriching, by organized rapine, in the first place his masters and in the second place himself. The death of Hoche by poison, at the very moment when he had become the sole rival to be feared, had left, indeed, the field clear for the ambition of Bonaparte, but had caused a heavy suspicion of the guilt of murder to fall upon him. Talleyrand, although to some extent discredited by his action during the revolutionary period, carried more weight in the councils of Europe at this time than did Bonaparte himself, all-powerful though the latter was through the effect of his military glory ; and the support of Talleyrand to Bonaparte and through Bonaparte to France as an organized state was at the beginning of the century simply essential.

The joint effect of the victories of Napoleon at Marengo and Hohenlinden, and of Talleyrand's direction of foreign affairs, soon left England isolated, deserted by all her allies except Portugal, and represented by an army which had had in Europe a career of almost unbroken misfortune. Such was the position in which Bonaparte had been placed by the victories and the policy that, had he been in the ordinary sense of the word a sane man, he might have reigned till death, and left a united people, the first

in the world, to be ruled over by his son, backed and aided by the new society. Napoleon by his earlier measures did not master or conquer or put down the Revolution, but rather completed the triumph of its principles. He had been himself trained in the revolutionary school. He belonged to the new rather than to the old society. He was well acquainted (no man better) with the language of the Revolution, which has so marvellous an attraction for the people of France. His mastery of its phrases was still complete, after his reign was over, in his exile at St. Helena, and was transmitted by him to the man who weakly attempted to continue his tradition—to Napoleon III. All those that Napoleon Bonaparte had about him were men who (mostly plebeians, Talleyrand being almost the sole exception) had found their opportunity in the Revolution. So blind had been the Bourbons that one of their late edicts had altered the rule which had prevailed for twenty years as to the officering of the army, and had declared that no officer should rise to the rank of captain who could not show four generations of nobility in the male line. The monarchy would have left Bernadotte a sergeant-major, whereas the Revolution set him on the high road to becoming a king, afterwards the august ally of the legitimate king of France, who, but for the Revolution, would have been the absolute master of the plebeian soldier. Napoleon, First Consul, proclaimed the revolutionary principle of the free career to talent ; of disregard of birth and of opinion ; of equality before the law ; of cheap education, free to boys of brains ; of free law ; and he seemed at first to add only to the revolutionary principles a certain greater regard to public order and a more unbroken success in arms.

What Napoleon might have done is less our concern, however, than what he did do. Unfortunately for himself, it was only after his fall that he began to realize the possibilities that had lain in his positions of 1800 and of 1802. In spite of his occasional talk of setting up the Italian, and of his half-hearted attempt to set up the Polish nationality, Napoleon had never truly believed in the force of the doctrine of nationalities, and had not only divided Germany, but had thought that it was possible for foreign and even for French influence to keep Germany permanently disunited. Napoleon wholly failed to discern that there was nothing except French influence which could unite Germany, and that by his policy of disunion he in fact made her union possible. In the

internal affairs of France, after speaking as the child of the Revolution, and while always intending, at any future time at which it might become necessary, once more to play this part, Napoleon changed his government to one of pure autocracy; and not only surrounded himself with theatrical pomp, added to the etiquette of the old court, but attempted to superadd to this the backing of a now powerless, though brilliant, nobility. I style his government a pure autocracy, for he must be indeed a poor despot who cannot secure the majority in a plébiscite. Still, Napoleon's plébiscites continued to remind Frenchmen of the glorious election of 1789, in which for the first time millions of free citizens had taken part in voting, and a whole nation had been called on for her voice. Napoleon's victories, however, blinded the whole French race, and his absurdities were not only tolerated, but actually approved by opinion. Talleyrand had been at the making of the fame; had been, indeed, at the helm, as far as the direction of foreign affairs was concerned, when Napoleon reached the height of glory and of power, and uniformly protested against all the acts of folly which Napoleon from time to time committed. Talleyrand fell from power under Napoleon through these protests, and Napoleon fell in 1814 through having preferred his own policy (if policy it could be called) to that of Talleyrand.

From 1800 to 1814 the history of Europe was only the history of the military coalition against France, but in 1815 Talleyrand created a wholly new state of things, which requires separate treatment at the hands of his biographer.

If, however, 1800 and 1815 are the years upon which it is necessary to dwell, and years in each of which Talleyrand asserted his power over the destinies of France, although under conditions wholly different and with results in many points dissimilar, 1800 is the more fascinating of the two. 1800 was the year of Napoleon's greatest power. The Continent was at his feet. England, the only one of his enemies still strong, had suffered seriously from the revolt in Ireland in 1796, had suspended specie payments, and was expecting invasion which it seemed doubtful whether she could repel. The Bonapartist party had widened until it included the vast majority of the French nation. The Bonapartists proper were those who had grown out from among the more moderate republicans. Many had been frightened. Others, and all the most honest, fired by the splendid achievements of the repub-



lican general in Italy and in Egypt, backed him against his enemies in Paris. As days passed by and Bonapartist imperialism began to be clearly seen, they looked upon it as a sorry jest and disbelieved in its continuance. In face of the creation of titles, the reconciliation with the church, and the revival of the ceremonial of the palace, they still believed in Napoleon as the army of the Revolution. It must, however, be remembered that France was living in a war fever which allowed of little thought and which half explained the suppression of freedom of speech, and that Napoleon's military promotions, which of all his acts came most home at such a time to the body of the French nation, were essentially democratic. Nearly all his marshals had sprung from among the common people and had risen from the ranks. His Legion of Honor, destined to be shamefully prostituted in future reigns, and his administration of education and of the laws, belonged also to the Revolution. It is noticeable, moreover, that, in spite of the tremendous sacrifices which he demanded of the French, he found them as a people poor and left them on the road to wealth. Many republicans, too, might not unreasonably feel that the person of Napoleon, rather than the mere proclamation of the principles of the Revolution, had killed forever, at least in France, the doctrine of the divine right of kings. Even at his fall he left in the minds of many, who, as against all other rulers, were republicans, and who certainly were keen partisans of the doctrines of the Revolution, the feeling expressed by Stendhal in the words, "Love for Napoleon is the only passion which has remained to me, though it does not prevent me from seeing his defects and weaknesses." These feelings, sharpened by a common hostility to the church, enabled the Bonapartists and the republicans to act cordially together from 1815 to 1830.

It will be interesting to see how far Talleyrand, in his memoirs, is able to throw light upon the creation in 1800 of a new doctrine of passive obedience in France, largely, as I think, through the influence of de Bonald, and on the modernizing by Chateaubriand of the state theology of the previous century, and the attempt of the latter to poetize the revival of the forms of Christian worship. It is to be presumed that Talleyrand expresses his sympathy with the reawakening of the spiritual life in France, although he had taken so large a share personally in its previous destruction; but it is

doubtful whether, while sympathizing with the object, he can show much personal regard for the chief author of the change. Chateaubriand, who had published in London as late as 1797 a work in which he revealed his own opinions, which were sceptical, and who succeeded in suddenly converting himself to Christianity in 1800, when he returned to France, had set up his new doctrine of æsthetic Christianity in his works of 1801 and 1802. His views seemed to come to this,—rather that Christianity is beautiful than that Christianity is true; but with the appearance of his books a new French literary style was born with the century—a style of a pretended and strained “naturalness,” under which French letters were destined to suffer during the whole century. Talleyrand himself was a master of French style, but a style more simple and more dignified than the strained and pretentious prose of Chateaubriand.

For Napoleon the revival of Catholicism meant the political support of the clergy and the respectability of his reign. For Chateaubriand it meant an outward sign of the revival of polite society; not necessarily of the old society, but of a society not actively revolutionary. The works of Chateaubriand did not appear alone. A literary revival marked the beginning of the century in France; but a revival without much real novelty or merit except so far as novelty and merit were to be found in Chateaubriand. The revival was rather the thawing of a frost than a true spring. Revolution and war had suppressed culture, and it was found again with peace. Chateaubriand’s style alone was completely new. De Bonald and de Maistre belonged to the past, among the philosophers, as did Delille, Parny, and most of the other poets who at this time put forth great masses of inferior work. Ducis and Népomucène Lemercier, on the other hand, in the drama, Royer-Collard in philosophy, Fontanes in criticism, and Madame de Staël in general literature, belonged, in some sense, to the future. The general condition of literature in France at the moment of Napoleon’s assumption of supreme power was far from brilliant. The two great names, de Staël and de Chateaubriand (of which the latter is great in the estimation rather of French than of foreign critics), are the names of opponents of the empire, although Chateaubriand was for a moment a friend. Although “*Corinne*” and “*Delphine*” are, to us degenerate beings, dull, Madame de Staël’s other books, and her

father's last book, in which Napoleon rightly suspected the daughter's hand, were brilliant, and these led to her disgrace and exile, and that of all her friends. Chateaubriand never, after his return to France, had to submit to exile, but he was often worried by the police, and was far from being able to write as he pleased.

Ballanche, whose book on Sentiment appeared in 1802, was in 1800 known only as a crack-brained printer in the provinces, and was to enter the Academy only a lifetime later. The empire was tottering to its fall when Ballanche came to Paris, and his fame and his friendships with Madame de Staël and her lovely friend do not belong to the moment of Napoleon's glory. In the book on Sentiment an attempt to restore the spiritualistic philosophy might have been discerned, had it been read, but it found few readers in 1802. Some writers of less note, but still considerable, who were neither in disgrace, nor in exile, nor provincial and unread, were so tied by the self-imposed restraints of place-hunting partisanship that their names and characters stand less high in the history of letters than their talents might have entitled them to expect. The peasant's son, Laplace, was so much bent upon becoming the great official who a few years later was known to the world of fashion as M. le Marquis de la Place that his great book perhaps suffered by his career. Fontanes is another example of the man of thought half-lost in the Napoleonic official, but in this case the loss was less great to the world. Fontanes was, like Laplace, a count of the empire, and, like Laplace, became a marquis of Louis XVIII. He was, perhaps, the least artificial of the French professional writers of the time, except Madame de Staël. To my mind the greatest literary man of France alive in 1800 was that disciple of Rousseau who at this moment showed immense promise in three works—a promise which was to lead to no future worthy performance, although Senancour continued to write till 1833 and to live till 1846. Not only in his "Obermann" and in his "Primitive Nature," but in his treatise upon love, which appeared in 1805, Senancour made use of descriptions of scenery as a means of producing moral impressions on the reader's mind, and in this practice he in his book of 1799 had preceded Chateaubriand, who was to owe to it the most brilliant successes of his pen.

On all these men, the most brilliant of his contemporaries,

Talleyrand may be expected to have much to say ; but I shall not be disposed myself to differ from him if he indicates the opinion for which one is well prepared—that he, Talleyrand, was the superior of all of them in mental power, by far the most useful of them all to France, and not the inferior of any of them in their strongest point of literary style.

“1815” was a very different period from 1800, but one in which Talleyrand was equally supreme, or more so, inasmuch as Bonaparte had been virtually removed from the scene and Talleyrand reigned alone.

The leaders of the Royalist party in 1814 and 1815 were the King and his brother, Louis XVIII. and the Comte d'Artois (afterwards Charles X.) ;—Louis XVIII., so moderate as to be a fit employer for Talleyrand ; the Comte d'Artois, the leader of an extreme party of ultra-royalists who were so powerful at court as to be the source of the most serious difficulties and dangers to Louis XVIII., whose line their folly ultimately overthrew. There is little doubt that Monsieur had often tried to procure the murder of Napoleon for the benefit of the Bourbons ; but the murder of the Comte d'Artois himself would have been of greater advantage to the French branch of the family. M. de Vielcastel and M. Duvergier de Hauranne, both of whom are excellent historians, but both of whom were sometimes led away by their Orleanist opinions, have tried to show that the government of Louis XVIII. had made many grave mistakes in 1814, and by its own acts so undermined an otherwise strong position as to help to bring about the return from Elba and the Hundred Days. So far as mistakes were made, they were mistakes forced upon the King and on Talleyrand by the party of the Comte d'Artois ; and there is much to be said for the opposite view, namely, that, considering the enormous difficulties under which he came to the throne and ruled France, Louis XVIII. made wonderfully few mistakes. To please at once the *émigrés* and the army, Monsieur and the half-pay officers, was impossible. It may safely be declared that the task of the Bourbon King in following Napoleon in 1814 was one of the heaviest and hardest that has ever fallen to the lot of man. Judging the policy in the light of subsequent events, some may argue that it would have been wiser to have disbanded the army rather than to have tried to win it over by making peers of nearly all Napoleon's marshals and (in November, 1814) selecting Soult

for Minister of War. But to say so is to be wise after the event. The policy of Talleyrand, accepted by the King, was to keep on foot a powerful army commanded by the best soldiers of the Continent, to divide the allies, and to thus restore France to the first place in Europe.

At Vienna at the end of 1814 and the beginning of 1815 the ablest diplomatist was Talleyrand; and Talleyrand, Metternich, and Castlereagh (under Talleyrand's real lead) were successful. Talleyrand, courteous, cynical, and corrupt, was a man of the times of his own youth; an abbé of the regency or of the court of Louis XV. His venality, proved in some cases by documentary evidence such as can hardly be disputed, was suspected in every negotiation in which he was engaged. Nevertheless, he was emphatically the man who always understood the situation; and at Vienna he performed immense services to France, as well as personal services to the French Bourbon line. Talleyrand went into the congress to maintain a principle in which he did not believe any more than did his master—that of legitimacy-at-all-hazards, except, indeed, as regards the right of the Pope to Avignon, which had been papal till the Revolution and was French only by revolutionary right. The ex-bishop who had served the republic, the consulate, the empire, and the Bourbons, devised his own line of conduct, dictated the instructions to himself, and convinced the King, not, indeed, that legitimacy was a principle likely to rule the modern world, but that it was the only principle upon which the plenipotentiary of Louis XVIII. could successfully attend the Congress of Vienna. Once convinced, Louis XVIII. backed him thoroughly, signed the instructions to Talleyrand, which Talleyrand wrote, without making an alteration, and approved his project of a firm alliance with Great Britain. At the moment when Talleyrand reached Vienna, "The Four," as they were called, the great allies,—England, Russia, Austria, and Prussia,—were thinking of excluding France from the most important of the deliberations. Within a month they were divided, two to two, and France, speaking through the mouth of Talleyrand, was the arbiter of Europe.

Metternich, though, indeed, he had never been a bishop, was, like Talleyrand, a man of old family who (also like the Prince de Benevent) had bowed before the Revolution, although swearing all the time that Europe did not contain so stanch a Tory as him-

self. Successful in 1814, but less brilliantly and conspicuously successful than Talleyrand, because he possessed greater means of success and represented a greater power, with a quarter of a million of men under arms in central Europe, instead of a power just humbled to the dust, Metternich was luckier than Talleyrand in his after-career, and may be looked upon as both the creator and preserver of the Austria of 1814-1848.

Castlereagh, a cold, stiff Englishman of brains, came to Vienna with a dread of Russia. He saw in Alexander's crafty and fantastic character danger of an attempt at Russian domination, but, though ready enough to come to terms with Metternich, he was by no means inclined by character or by opinions to trust himself to Talleyrand and France. He had, however, seen that Alexander intended to keep Napoleon in reserve and to bring him back whenever it might suit his purpose so to do, and wished to remove Napoleon to St. Helena or Ascension or some other Atlantic island. He was on this particular point at one not only with Metternich, but also with Talleyrand and the King of France. Castlereagh would not indeed break a treaty—a difficulty which never hindered Talleyrand, and which would not have hindered Louis XVIII., who had already broken the money clauses of the treaty which in this instance was in question. But Castlereagh knew that Bonaparte was active in his Elban exile, and thought that some overt act would soon give an opportunity of retiring without loss of honor from inconvenient engagements. Castlereagh on his arrival at Vienna had supported the scheme for excluding France, and only changed his tone when the immense ability and tact of Talleyrand had made the French plenipotentiary's presence felt.

France and England were necessarily drawn together at Vienna in the winter of 1814-15, for, all the questions that directly concerned the two countries having been settled in the treaties signed at Paris, they were impartial powers. Great Britain and France had practically nothing to gain and nothing to lose at Vienna; while Russia, Prussia, and Austria were full of hopes and fears, for they had much to gain or lose. The only point in which the five powers were agreed, and in which they had also the support of Sweden, Spain, and Portugal, was in dealing with European peoples like so many flocks of sheep without the slightest attention to their wishes. F. von Gentz has ad-

mitted, with the express approval of his words by Metternich, that, as regards all the powers except England and France, the congress was a "battlefield," and that the "object in view was the division of the spoil." The great powers at Vienna might, by a slight attention to the principle of nationality, have definitely fixed the future of all Europe. As it was, they founded a state of things which was shaken in 1830, and which has been in steady course of complete disruption ever since 1848.

Much of the nominal work of the congress had been done before the chief plenipotentiaries of the great powers met. The union of Sweden and Norway had formed a secret article of one treaty, that of Belgium and Holland of another, and the addition of Genoa to the Piedmontese dominions of the King of Sardinia had been settled by the great powers and Spain, without the smallest trace of any consultation of the wishes of the citizens of the former republic, who were thus handed over to what was at that time the most clerical and reactionary government in the world. On the other hand, the clerical Belgians had been given to a Protestant people, whose speech most of them could not understand. Venice, as little consulted, had been bestowed on Austria. There remained for distribution Poland, Saxony, and Naples; and here lay the difficulties of the congress, of which Talleyrand availed himself with the highest skill.

As regarded Naples, Louis XVIII. attached much importance to the removal of Murat from the throne, desiring the restoration of the line of the former kings of the Two Sicilies, nominally because they were "legitimate," but in fact because they were his cousins. Murat was unpopular with the majority of the population, although he possessed an excellent army, and had friends among the mob and, outside his country, in the papal states; and there was a dream abroad of the possibility of the creation of a united Italy under Murat. To have left him on the throne of Naples would have been to abstain from closing the Napoleonic era; and the congress very naturally decided, although privately at first, that he must be removed.

The difficulties as regarded Poland and Saxony remained, but Poland and Saxony formed, in fact, one question. The King of Saxony was a prisoner at Berlin. The Russian forces occupied the grand duchy of Warsaw. Alexander had persuaded himself that he really intended to restore the liberties of Poland; but the Poles

themselves foresaw that, even had he remained long in these ideas (which was far from probable), his successor would certainly have been in this respect a true-born Russian. Russia and Prussia had agreed that Prussia should have Saxony, and that Poland should be formed into a kingdom united by a personal union to the Russian throne. Austria was bitterly opposed to both portions of this scheme. France and England were unpledged, but Castlereagh was opposed to any augmentation of the Czar's dominions. Talleyrand saw that the division of the powers into two hostile groups (consisting of England, France, and Austria on one side, and of Russia and Prussia on the other) was possible, and he speedily brought it about.

Alexander's only object at Vienna was to get possession of the duchy of Warsaw, but he was ready at the same time to obtain for Prussia all he could, anywhere and everywhere, except in Poland; looking upon Prussia as his only probable ally in future years. He bitterly hated Metternich, who had prevented his commanding in chief the allied armies, which the vain Emperor had wished to do, with Jomini for "dry nurse," to use the military phrase. He hated England for her former opposition to his plans in Finland and in Turkey, and he hated Castlereagh above all other Englishmen, for Castlereagh was a man who read him like a book. He hated the Bourbons most of all for having rejected his patronage and his advice, and he hated Talleyrand as their envoy. Hardenberg was a moderate man enough, but could not control the Prussian military spirit which wanted Saxony as a step towards turning Austria out of Germany.

Thiers (thoroughly untrustworthy when Napoleon is on the scene) has drawn in his history an excellent picture of the position of the Continent at the moment of the meeting of the congress, but has been guilty of a great error in making an attack on Talleyrand (in which he has been followed by the other French historians) for having preferred the alliance of England and Austria to that of Russia and Prussia. The French historians who are angry with Talleyrand for having indirectly gained for Prussia the Rhine provinces, by refusing Saxony to her, have all forgotten that in 1814 Prussia was far from dangerous, and that it was only after the middle of the present century that Prussia began to stand upon an equal footing with the other four great European powers. Thiers wrote this part of his book in the



second half of the present century, when France had begun to see in Prussia a possible enemy seated too near her capital by the possession of Aix-la-Chapelle and Cologne. Talleyrand's work was good work for his time, and it was the business of his successors to provide for matters which occurred half a century later.

Talleyrand's dexterity was superb. His position was as dignified as that of Metternich and Castlereagh and Hardenberg was commonplace, and that of Alexander rapacious and disgraceful. Talleyrand's language was worthy of his position. He asked for nothing. He was guided by a plain principle—that of legitimacy, restoration, and public law; while the remaining powers were obviously guided by immediate interest or jealousy alone. In the beginning of his action for dividing the great powers, Talleyrand played with Castlereagh. The latter had plainly showed that he cared little about Saxony, but much about Poland. Talleyrand, who did not much care personally for either, at once protested that he cared greatly about Saxony, but little about Poland. This policy forced Metternich, who cared equally about both, to act as the intermediary to draw Castlereagh and Talleyrand together, and this in spite of Metternich's personal dislike for Talleyrand and of his full knowledge of the unpopularity of the French alliance among the German Austrians. Up to this moment Austria, although directly menaced in her existence by the rapacity both of Russia and of Prussia, had shrunk from challenging German public opinion by openly leaning upon the French army. But the alliance of Bavaria and of the smaller German powers was obviously not enough.

At the end of December Talleyrand suddenly proposed a secret treaty between England, France, and Austria, to which it would be easy to procure the subsequent assent of Bavaria, Hanover, Holland, and others of the minor states, and by which the maintenance of Saxony would be laid down in principle. Nothing came of this suggestion for some few days, and it was even agreed to leave the terms of a compromise with Prussia to a commission on which France was not to be represented. On this Talleyrand at once threatened to leave Vienna, and to publicly throw on Castlereagh the blame for the complete success of Prussia and Russia, which without French interposition would be inevitable. But Castlereagh had been pressed by the cabinet at home, at the wish of the Prince Regent, on the suggestion of his

Hanoverian ministers, to save Saxony, and he naturally shrank from letting Talleyrand speak out or leave. Austria and England accordingly insisted on the admission of a representative of France to the commission which met on December 31, 1814. A Polish compromise had already been virtually agreed to which gave two thirds of the duchy of Warsaw to Russia and divided a third between Austria and Prussia.

On the 1st January, 1815, we find from Castlereagh's memoirs that he received the news of the conclusion of peace between England and the United States, which allowed the immediate return to Europe of the best of the peninsular troops. On the 2d January the Prussians at a meeting of the commission blustered and threatened resort to arms, believing that Austria would cede before a direct Russo-Prussian menace, and Castlereagh privately asked Talleyrand to draw up the secret treaty of alliance between England, France, and Austria. On the 3d January the treaty was signed by Metternich, Talleyrand, and Castlereagh. By it each of the three powers was to contribute 150,000 men, and the new allies were, by a self-denying clause, to accept no violation of the treaty of Paris in their own favor. The secret treaty was communicated to the three small powers named above. Bavaria and Hanover of course adhered immediately, while the Dutch plenipotentiary signed some days later, after a reference to his court. Talleyrand in a few weeks had destroyed the united action of the allies of the great war, and, without for one moment abandoning the dignity which became the plenipotentiary of France in the day of her misfortune, had become the arbiter of Europe. Within a few months after the entry of the allies to Paris, the King of France, who had the French commander in the Peninsular War for his minister, was able to write to his plenipotentiary, who had been one of the grand officers of Napoleon, that the Duke of Wellington would be an excellent commander for the united armies of France and England in the field.

Russia and Prussia at once drew back, foiled. A compromise was come to by which Prussia obtained a third of Saxony, Leipzig was preserved to the Saxon Kingdom, and the matter settled; but the great position won for France by Talleyrand remained, and although the return from Elba destroyed the political position of the Prince for many years, it did not wholly undo his work, the results of which were seen in the peaceful development and conclusion of the reign of Louis XVIII.

Talleyrand may have been venal, and his action may have been often marked by duplicity, but at Vienna he was straightforward (possibly because it was his interest to be straightforward), and there is a really noble despatch of his to Metternich extant, in which he points out the evils likely to be caused to Europe by the complete departure from all grounds of principle in the action of the congress. Hundreds of thousands of souls had been counted over and counted back again on many occasions by quarrelling plenipotentiaries, exactly as booty obtained upon the roads might be wrangled over by highwaymen ; and it seems strange that it should be to a Talleyrand that we have to turn for an exposition of those principles which ought to have obtained at Vienna, but which, as a fact, were only honored in the breach.

It is possible to admire the talent of Talleyrand and his immense services to his country without respecting the man who, after being a distinguished Catholic theologian, agent-general of the clergy of France, and then a bishop, had consented to consecrate the elective schismatic bishops, and been on the brink of becoming elective archbishop of Paris, when he was elected a member of the Assembly for the Seine and suddenly became the bosom-friend of Danton ; who shortly afterwards was the toady first of Barras and then of Bonaparte, and who throughout life, even when Minister for Foreign Affairs, remained the desperate gambler on the Stock Exchange that he had been even when agent-general of the clergy under the old *régime*.

CHARLES W. DILKE.